

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 118527
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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: NATO, PORG, MILI, XF, XG, XI, NAC

SUBJECT: REPORT ON THE SITUATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN:
TALKING POINTS FOR NAC DISCUSSION

REFS: (A) USNATO 4374, DTG 281852Z APR 78 (NOTAL)
(B) USNATO 4190, DTG 251150Z APR 78 (NOTAL)

1. WE CONCUR IN TALKING POINTS CONTAINED PARA 4, REF A,
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 118527

AND PROVIDE BELOW SUPPLEMENTARY TALKING POINTS ON
SOVMEDRON LOGISTIC SUPPORT WHICH MAY ALSO BE DRAWN
UPON.

-- AS IS THE CASE WITH OTHER NAVIES, THE BULK OF SOVIET-
DEPLOYED LOGISTIC SUPPORT IS VESTED IN NAVAL AUXILIARIES
DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY FOR REPLENISHMENT AT SEA. ONE OF

THE PRINCIPAL SOVIET WEAKNESSES IN LOGISTIC SUPPORT, HOWEVER, IS THE LIMITED NUMBER OF FORWARD FACILITIES WHERE REPLENISHMENT SHIPS CAN REGULARLY RESTOCK THEIR CARGO.

-- SINCE THE EARLY 1970'S, SOVIET MERCHANT AND NAVAL TANKERS HAVE ROUTINELY CALLED ON SOME PORTS IN MEDITERRANEAN

LITTORAL STATES FOR REPROVISIONING. WE NOTE THAT SOVIET NAVAL OILERS HAVE TAKEN SOME STEPS DESIGNED TO DISGUISE THEIR NAVAL SUBORDINATION: SOME HAVE CHANGED THEIR PAINT SCHEME TO MATCH THAT OF THE MERCHANT FLEET, AND, IN ADDITION, ARE NOW BEING MANNED BY CIVILIAN CREWS.

-- OWING TO THEIR APPARENT COMMERCIAL STATUS, THESE VESSELS CAN EASILY CIRCUMVENT THE REQUIREMENT FOR DIPLOMATIC CLEARANCE IMPOSED ON NAVAL SHIPS, THEREBY AFFORDING THE SOVMEDRON UNOBTRUSIVE ACCESS TO PORTS FOR REPROVISIONING AND, IN TURN, COMPLETE FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WITHOUT DRAWING UNDUE ATTENTION TO A SOVIET NAVAL PRESENCE NEARBY.

2. SOVIET-SYRIAN ARMS RELATIONSHIP: (FYI: WHILE PROTECTION OF SOURCES PREVENTS PRESENTATION OF MORE DETAILED AND DEFINITIVE ARGUMENT, MISSION SHOULD REITERATE, ALONG FOLLOWING LINES, VIEW THAT NEW MILITARY ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT HAS BEEN SIGNED. END FYI)
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PAGE 03 STATE 118527

-- WITH REGARD TO THE SOVIET-SYRIAN ARMS RELATIONSHIP NOTED IN PARA 12 OF THE REPORT, WHILE THE SCALE OF THE MILITARY ASSISTANCE EMBODIED IN THE NEW ARMS ACCORDS REMAINS UNCLEAR, EVIDENCE CONVINCES US THAT A NEW AGREEMENT HAS INDEED BEEN SIGNED WHICH PROVIDES FORMAL ASSURANCES THAT SYRIA WILL RECEIVE INCREASED QUANTITIES OF NEW MILITARY EQUIPMENT.

3. SOVIET EFFORTS TO GAIN ACCESS TO SPANISH PORT FACILITIES: SHOULD THIS ISSUE BE RAISED DURING NAC DISCUSSION OF THE MED REPORT, YOU MAY DRAW ON THE FOLLOWING POINTS.

-- SOVIET INTEREST IN GAINING ACCESS FOR ITS MERCHANT VESSELS TO THE SOUTHERN SPANISH PORT OF ALGECIRAS DATES FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SOVIET-SPANISH TRADING COMPANY INTRAMAR IN 1975, AND POSSIBLY FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOVIET-SPANISH COMMERCIAL RELATIONS IN 1972. (COMMERCIAL TIES WERE BROKEN OFF IN 1975, BUT WERE RE-ESTABLISHED IN FEBRUARY 1977 ALONG WITH SOVIET-SPANISH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.)

-- LAST WINTER MOSCOW RENEWED ITS REQUEST FOR COMMERCIAL REPAIR AND BUNKERING FACILITIES AT ALGECIRAS. THE SOVIETS MOST LIKELY ENVISAGE THE PORT AS A POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE TO CEUTA WHICH CURRENTLY PROVIDES SHIP CHANDLERING FACILITIES BUT NOT BUNKERING FOR SOVIET MERCHANT SHIPS.

-- IN OUR VIEW, ACCESS TO ALGECIRAS WOULD marginally INCREASE SOVIET CAPABILITIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, PRIMARILY THROUGH ITS POTENTIAL FOR AUGMENTING SOVMEDRON LOGISTIC SUPPORT ACTIVITIES. AT THE SAME TIME, THE IMPACT ON ALLIED INTERESTS, WHILE NOT INSIGNIFICANT, WOULD APPEAR TO BE RELATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 STATE 118527

CIRCUMSCRIBED FROM A STRATEGIC VANTAGE POINT. ALLIED SHIP MOVEMENTS HAVE BEEN MONITORED FOR SOME TIME BY A SOVIET INTELLIGENCE SHIP OFF ROTA. ALSO, THE USEFULNESS OF ALGECIRAS TO SOVIET WARSHIPS APPEARS QUESTIONABLE, EVEN ASSUMING THIS MIGHT BE A LONGER-TERM SOVIET AIM.

-- WE HAVE EXPRESSED OUR CONCERN ON THE ALGECIRAS QUESTION TO GOS OFFICIALS AND, WHILE NO OFFICIAL DECISION HAS YET BEEN ANNOUNCED, WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, AND THE ARMED FORCES ALL OPPOSE GRANTING THE SOVIET REQUEST ON SECURITY GROUNDS. ON JANUARY 31 FOREIGN MINISTER OREJA TOLD REPORTERS THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR THE GOS TO ACCEDE TO THE SOVIET REQUEST, BUT THAT THE GOS HAD NOT YET REACHED A FINAL DECISION. THE SPANISH ARE OBVIOUSLY NOT IN ANY RUSH TO DO SO.

-- FORMAL DISAPPROVAL OF THE SOVIET PROPOSAL APPARENTLY IS BEING HELD IN ABEYANCE SO AS NOT TO STIR UP OPPOSITION FORCES WHICH MIGHT FAVOR THE REQUEST, AND IN VIEW OF THE CAMPAIGN IN THE ALGECIRAS PRESS, WHICH MAINTAINS THAT THE SOVIET PRESENCE WOULD MEAN THE CREATION OF 700 NEW JOBS AND INCREASED REVENUES FOR THE ECONOMICALLY TROUBLED AREA. THE SPANISH ALSO WOULD LIKE TO AVOID A DIRECT NEGATIVE RESPONSE TO THE SOVIETS.

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